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WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon voted today to deny pension benefits to members of the House of Representatives convicted of corruption. The Congressional Pension Forfeiture Bill (H.R. 476) passed with unanimous support, 431 to 0.

"No one should make the mistake of thinking they are above the law, least of all elected officials who are entrusted with serving the American people," Rep. Melancon said. "Taxpayers should not have to pay retirement benefits to corrupt politicians who abuse their power. This legislation is another positive step towards comprehensive ethics reform and I am proud to support it."

The Congressional Pension Forfeiture bill requires that Members convicted of certain federal felonies related to the performance of their official duties forfeit their Congressional pension rights under the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System if the conduct constituting the felony takes place after the bill's enactment and while the Member is in Congress. This bill applies to the bribery of public officials and witnesses; wrongfully acting as agents of foreign principals; conspiracy to commit one of the offenses listed above; conspiracy to violate the post-employment prohibitions; and perjury and subornation of perjury in falsely denying committing one of these crimes.

Currently, corrupt politicians are still eligible to receive taxpayer-funded pensions for their service in Congress - even if they are convicted of serious abuses of power. Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham, R-Calif. (1991-2005), who was convicted of accepting bribes from defense contractors, is eligible to receive an annual congressional pension estimated at \$36,000. Rep. Bob Ney, R-Ohio (1995-2005), convicted of charges in the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal, will be eligible for a roughly \$29,000 annual pension when he turns 62. These types of crimes will be covered under the bill.

Melancon continued, "Recent bribery scandals and criminal convictions have severely damaged the public's trust in Congress. This bill will right a major wrong and make sure taxpayers aren't stuck paying the bill when corrupt politicians retire."

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